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ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

June 3, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In this time of great turmoil, I ask you to quiet your hearts and listen with me to the message of the peaceful protests we are seeing across our nation. They are asking for justice with peace as the goal.

As people of faith, we begin with the fact that no matter the color of our skin, we are all made in the image and likeness of God. My friend Jimmy Munford was an African American man who went ashore on the second day of the landing at Normandy. He said to me: “Archbishop, I walked through the blood of white men and black men and red men and yellow men. There was no difference in the color of their blood.”

We have lost our way as a nation because of prejudice and selfishness and jealousy. Recent events and protests are only the latest symptoms of a longstanding and underlying cultural sickness. There is no moral framework for the fact that each of us has Christ in us and with us. Jesus wanted us to open our hearts to His powerful love, and to be His face and voice and arms and ears for every person who crosses the path of our lives.

We give people life when we accompany all in developing to their full human potential—into the people God created them to be.

This means providing quality education that leads to employment and fair wages, pathways to progress for families in need of healing and structure, access to health care for the uninsured, helping people develop skills and find jobs, rehabbing houses in distress to provide affordable housing, support for people experiencing homelessness, and mental health services. Importantly, we must look at *why* people do not have access to so many of these things. Catholic Charities of St. Louis and Society of St. Vincent de Paul conferences in our parishes of the Archdiocese of St. Louis have done a great deal of work on all of those fronts. But there’s much more to be done, as too many are in despair.

It means listening to our brothers and sisters of color and learning about their experiences—their triumphs, struggles and sorrows—so that we understand how to best walk with them through all of these moments. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. We must develop all of these gifts in ourselves and in one another as the foundation with which we can move our society forward.

It's time to come together as a people and take the future of our region as our challenge. Let's focus on what binds us versus what divides us.

It will take prayer. It will take hard work. It will take the involvement of all of us!

We need to take a knee in prayer, and ask forgiveness, and forgive one another.

We need to see the disparities among us, some of which were pointed out in the Ferguson Commission Report, and ask: have we made sufficient progress? What remains to be done? I know the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of St. Louis has taken steps forward, but much still needs to be done.

Let's all work together – government officials, business leaders, social activists, educators, police, fathers and mothers, the young and old – to help in whatever way we can to figure out our way forward. What do we want for our community?

Scripture tells us to turn our swords into plow shares. Let's turn our guns into metal. And may that metal someday be the statue in our community that stands as reminder that, here in the greater St. Louis region, we chose justice so there would be peace.

Are you willing to join me in this pursuit of justice?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "Robert J. Carlson" in a cursive script.

Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson
Archbishop of St. Louis